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6 Antwerp 1672 to 1683

There is no distinct seizure in style and execution, as far as becomes apparent, between the paintings Jan Davidsz. de Heem produced in his last years in Utrecht and the continuation of his production in Antwerp. Thus, it is not easy to decide for some still lifes that must have been painted around 1672 whether they were made in Antwerp or in Utrecht. However, a stepping stone is provided by two cartouche still lifes that can be recognized as collaborations with the Antwerp history painter Erasmus Quellinus II, and that as such were in all likelihood painted in Antwerp. De Heem had already collaborated with Quellinus in the early 1650s (see, among others, cat. nos. A 130, 131, and 138).[561]

A 239
A2 1 Erasmus Quellinus II,*Saint Francisus Xaverius*, signed and dated 1676, oil on canvas 270 x 192 cm (detail). Amsterdam, Church De Krijtberg

A cartouche still life with a 'portrait' bust of Christ in the centre and five winged heads of cherubs included in the wreaths of flowers and fruit (cat. no. A 239), also in view of the subject, will have originated in Antwerp after de Heem's return in 1672. The motifs in grisaille and the angels are by Erasmus Quellinus, and they fit well with that artist's late paintings from the late 1660s and 1670s (figs. A2 1 and 2).[562] Quellinus's handling had become more refined over the years, developing from a Rubensian, rather painterly manner to a smooth, more classicist style. Like de Heem, Quellinus had contacts in the north and will have spent some time Amsterdam in connection with his work for the decoration of the new town hall in 1656, but he was never away from Antwerp for long. For this painting, judging from close inspection, Quellinus's head of Christ and the angels were done first, leaving space for de Heem's contribution. The painting bears a de Heem signature and a date 16.1, but in view of their somewhat uneasy calligraphy it would appear that these were copied, perhaps from a strip that was cut off at the bottom. Although possible, it is not likely that the date actually read 1671, since in that year de Heem was still residing in Utrecht while in view of the collaboration with Quellinus and in view of the Roman-Catholic tendency, this painting most likely originated in Antwerp. Like in the earlier collaborations with Quellinus, the relief behind the still-life motifs rests on two lion's claws. The composition, apart from the fact that there is a 'portrait' in the centre, deviates from the Utrecht cartouche still life with the portrait of Prince William III (cat. no. A 237). In

that painting, there is a section of fruit at the top and an arrangement of flowers under the portrait, draped over the lion. Here, there are a garland and two festoons, predominantly of flowers. Mixed in, there is a large, but not conspicuous selection of small fruit, some podded peas, and nuts.

A2 2 Erasmus Quellinus II, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, signed and dated 1669, oil on canvas, 176 x 218 cm. Location unknown.

There are cherries, blackberries, gooseberries, rosehips, small bunches of black and white grapes, plums, medlars, olives, hazelnuts and acorns. The choice of flowers is also quite varied; included are various types of roses, lilies, snowball, morning glory, poppy anemone, hollyhock, bellflower, red broom, a tulip and hop. In a manner highly similar to cat. no. A 237, stalks of wheat weave through the composition, giving it a particular sense of liveliness. The treatment of the flowers, like in cat. no. A 237, is still reminiscent of de Heem's flower paintings from the second half of the 1660s. The arrangement is less compact than that of the festoons and garlands around William III and, in a way, more reminiscent of de Heem's floral bouquets in a vase, in which the shooting stalks of wheat also had become a prominent feature during the 1660s, just as the snail on the ledge, and it also features de Heem's 'signature' red admiral butterfly, at lower right. This cartouche still life is also substantially smaller than cat. no. A 237.

Almost exactly the same size as cat. no. A 239, is cat. no. A 238, also in a private collection. Instead of a portrait, it has a rummer of white wine in the centre, much like the earlier cat. nos. A 129 and 138 from the early 1650s, of which the latter probably had also been painted in collaboration with Erasmus Quellinus. Like in cat. no. A 239, the cartouche still life incorporates five heads of little angels, putti or cherubs, some of which may have been painted after the same models, compare, for instance the child at lower right in cat. no. A 239 with the one at lower left in cat. no. A 238. In the later painting, however, the children's heads are less prominent, since they have been represented as sculpted reliefs, while in the other work they have been rendered as creatures of flesh and blood. In cat. no. A 238, there are no lion's claws at the base of the relief but a pair of eagle's (or griffin's?) heads that are somewhat reminiscent of the eagles that flank William III's portrait in cat no. A 237. The overall, rather fleshy handling of the flowers and fruit is closer to cat. nos. A 237 and 232, and as such probably somewhat earlier than cat. no. A 239. In fact, little time will have passed between the production of cat. no. A 237 and 238. Abundance appears to be the subject of cat. no. A 238.

A 238

It breathes a wonderful lavishness, there is a substantial selection of fruit and flowers, surrounding the shiny, well-filled glass. The top of the painting is dominated by some large corn cobs and even more than the other examples, stalks of wheat have been woven through the composition, and several are hanging on top of and across the rummer. It may be that de Heem was alluding to the bread (made from the grain) and wine of the Eucharist, but perhaps that is taking things too far. More so than the other two examples discussed above, this painting is crowded with little creatures, snails, bugs, caterpillars, ants, a grasshopper, and moths and butterflies. The oranges in this painting are at best half-hidden and it is highly unlikely that they have an Orangist connotation here. More likely, they have been included as part of de Heem's standard repertoire.

A 240

A horizontal format, but slightly wider and just as lavish an arrangement, is a garland of fruit and flowers in the Staatliche Kunsthalle in Karlsruhe (cat. no. A 240). The detail of execution of this painting is virtually unsurpassed in de Heem's oeuvre, which makes it somewhat difficult to fit in. It was probably part of the choice collection of Doctor Jan Pieter Wierman in Leiden, which came up for auction in August 1762, and in which it was praised as "being held for, and actually is, the most noble and best that was ever seen by this master". Fetching 900 guilders, it was one of the most costly

painting in that collection, and one of several paintings that are still renowned.[563] Cat. no. A 240 was probably again sold in Amsterdam only three years later and equally praised in the catalogue of that auction ("one of the most eminent pieces by this major and long-famous master"), but then it fetched (only) 301 guilders, while an elaborate floral bouquet with additional still-life motifs (cat. no. A 242, to be discussed below) brought 148 guilders in 1767, also in Amsterdam. A somewhat later bouquet in a vase (cat. no. A 248, to be discussed below) sold in Amsterdam in 1770 for 525 guilders.

It is interesting to note that, while we may assume that Jan Davidsz. de Heem returned to Antwerp in 1672 because of the economic situation in the North, many of the still lifes from his second Antwerp period make an early appearance in Dutch (mainly Amsterdam) auctions and in Dutch collections in the eighteenth century, while only a few of them have an early Antwerp provenance. The fact that Amsterdam was the leading city on the international art market in the eighteenth century is of course a factor that must be taken into account here. Of the 34 paintings from this period, fourteen surfaced first in the Northern Netherlands in (or before) the eighteenth century, two in the South Netherlands, and four outside of the Netherlands. For another fourteen examples no provenance before 1800 is recorded. For the earlier decades in de Heem's career, numbers provide less certainty.[564] They do show, in any case, that already in the eighteenth century, de Heem's works had shifted in many directions, and that also quite a few had already been included in foreign collections or circulated on the foreign art market.

The Karlsruhe garland (cat. no A 240) is hung in a rectangular, shallow niche, similar to that in cat. no. A 256, de Heem's only known dated painting from after 1655, painted in 1675. The garland is attached by blue ribbons to nails in the upper corners. Flowers and fruit are evenly interwoven; there are several bunches of grapes, both white and black, of different types, and a small melon, that give body to the garland. As often in de Heem's compositions, a white rose functions as the central flower. It is flanked by a (formerly) bright yellow, and a pink rose.[565] Blue, orange, and red motifs have been placed in full balance, in a field of many shades of green. Again, the garland is interwoven with stalks of wheat, in a lively play of curves. There is a snail on the lower edge of the niche, which for this period can almost be considered as a signature motif, and a second snail crawls on a branch in the garland. There are an orange tip and red admiral butterfly, but creeping and crawling animals are less abundantly present than in cat. no. A 238. There are two almost invisible caterpillars, some ants, and few other small creatures. More than in cat. no A 238, there is an abundance of dewdrops.

A 241

Close in style to the Karlsruhe garland is a similar composition in the collection of the Uffizi in Florence (cat. no. A 241). It is almost the same size and has been executed in a similar fine manner,

but it is generally less well preserved. This painting is traditionally believed to have been bought from the artist by Cosimo III de' Medici on a visit to Utrecht in 1669. As already mentioned in the chapter on de Heem's biography, de Heem would appear to be the only artist living in Utrecht at that time by whom the Duke owned a painting. However, the journal of Cosimo's trip does not indicate that the artist he paid a visit to, was a still-life painter, let alone that it was de Heem, who was by no means the only important artist who was active in Utrecht in 1669. Apart from the fact that this garland was already recorded in the Medici collection in 1681, there is no evidence that the painting in question was actually acquired on the occasion of this Dutch visit. Moreover, a painting of the quality of this work would most likely have been painted upon commission and would not have been standing around in the artist's studio to be picked by whoever happened to drop by and took a liking to it. It may be, that Cosimo de'Medici ordered the painting when in Utrecht, but that de Heem, for some reason or other, only painted and delivered it three or four years later. Several motifs are very similar to the Karlsruhe painting, such as the large milk thistle at upper left, which was clearly based upon the same study as the one in that work. The rosebud at lower left, and the turned pink rose and the large and small snowball are also very similar in both paintings. The Uffizi garland has more flowers and less fruit, the niche is marble rather than grey hard stone. The garland itself is less filled and compact than the one in Karlsruhe, and it is less focused, but livelier. The Karlsruhe painting (cat. no. A 241) has the central group of three roses of different colours, with a red-and-white tulip above, the Uffizi (cat. no. A 241) has a cluster of flowers to the left (roses, marigold and cornflower) and one to the right (peony, snowballs, pear blossom). They may have been connected more, visually, through the two yellow roses of which the orpiment has faded, but now there is a separation, which is also marked by the red-and-white tulip below. A second, relatively large red-and-white tulip at upper right feels somewhat like an addition that throws the composition off balance. Both tulips can be found in other compositions as well. The one at upper right is repeated from cat. nos. A 235 and A 236, and returns in cat. no. A 255 (in all upside down). The tulip at lower centre it shares with cat. no. A 242, to be discussed below. The same tulip also appears in several bouquets by Abraham Mignon.[566] In one of them, a painting that was with Bernheimer-Colnaghi in London in 2005, it is identical (fig. AU 28 in the previous chapter).[567] In that painting the execution is less hard than in the others and the same is true for the pear blossom in that same painting. In my view, the painting is an early work by Mignon, which was painted under the close guidance of de Heem. It may be that de Heem executed (or finished) the tulip and the blossom in Mignon's work, as I already speculated on p. 237. In Mignon's other versions, there is some difference in the flaming and in the outlines of the petals of the flower. It would seem that – afterwards, or simultaneously – Mignon drew his own study of this tulip and reused it at least three times, while de Heem took his study of it with him to Antwerp and employed it for cat. nos. A 241 and A 242. The tulip at lower left in cat. no. A 240 in Karlsruhe is strongly reminiscent of that in cat. no. A 218, of which tulip, as I have demonstrated on p. 242, Mignon probably made his own study or studies.

As in the case of the Mauritshuis garland (cat. no. A 208), these garlands are clearly meant to be viewed up close, and not intended as decorations above a door, even though their measurements would be appropriate for that purpose. While the viewpoint of cat. no. A 208 might suggest that it should be viewed from below, in the case of the Karlsruhe and Florence garlands the perspective of the niche suggests a viewpoint at the centre.

A large flower painting which also includes other still-life motifs (cat. no. A 242) was probably also painted shortly after de Heem's return to Antwerp.[568] This still life is quite unique in de Heem's oeuvre. There is no other example in which he combined such an elaborate vase of flowers

with other prominent still-life motifs in this manner. While the bouquet of flowers – combined with branches of fruit, stalks of wheat and other plants – is the most prominent motif in this still life, it is rivalled to some degree by the elaborately detailed silver tazza carrying several kinds of fruit.

A 242

The stem of this tazza is made up of the figures of the satyr Silenus, who nursed the young Bacchus, whom he is holding up, while Bacchus supports the dish of the tazza. Silenus is standing astride over a large dog, which seems to be barking up at Bacchus. While no such silver object has been identified, it is likely that de Heem portrayed an existing vessel, likely at the request of a patron. In any case, the dish appears to be an exquisite piece of craftsmanship.

The composition of this still life is well-balanced. The bouquet of flowers occupies most of the space above the diagonal from upper left to lower right. It is also concentrated in the centre third of the picture plane, while the tazza and the prominent orange are the dominating motifs of the vertical outer thirds. The diagonal from lower right to upper left is accentuated by an oblique group of lighter flowers in the centre of the bouquet. De Heem has distributed his colour accents – whites, blues, reds and orange tones – evenly across the picture plane. In addition, he has left empty spaces at upper left and right, allowing the composition to breathe, and also to be able to show the rays of light falling in from the upper left. Through inclusion of the stalks of wheat that meander through the bouquet, the artist again suggests movement and depth. The sense of depth is further enhanced by the overlapping of flowers and stems. Perhaps more than in any other floral still life, de Heem demonstrates his command of *houding* here. The image is enlivened through the inclusion of a flying finch and a great tit, to the left of the bouquet, and by a variety of butterflies, moths and bugs. The handling of the fruit on the tazza and on the plates, is quite similar to that in both garlands discussed above (cat. nos. A 240 and A 241). This also is the case for most of the flowers. At the same time there is a similarity in the flowers with several of the later bouquets to be discussed later.

The oriental tapestry in this painting is an unusual motif. Moreover, it is the only example in which the artist combined it with a bouquet of flowers. Perhaps this motif, like the tazza, was included at the request of the patron it was painted for. Only four times in his entire career, as far as we know now, did de Heem opt for an oriental tapestry to drape a table with in his still lifes. The

earliest example, from 1629, is cat. no. A 020, in Budapest. The other two examples, the large luxury still life from 1641 in the Brussels Municipal Museum (cat. no. A 054), and cat. no. A 066 from *c*.1642 also precede the present painting by several decades. Oriental tapestries were a popular motif in Dutch still lifes from the third quarter of the seventeenth century. While this was mainly due to the influence of the Amsterdam artist Willem Kalf (1619-1693), de Heem does not appear to have been directly inspired here by Kalf's soft, creased and propped-up examples, nor by one of Willem van Aelst's flower paintings with a propped up oriental tapestry. The red cloth covering part of the tapestry is also a unique feature in a de Heem still-life. He often employed white napkins in his compositions in a similar manner, but this is the only example in which he has opted for a tinted one, probably in order to maintain a tonal unity, instead of placing a bright accent.

In terms of iconography, like most of de Heem's still lifes, this painting, first and foremost, appears to be a celebration of the endless variety of God's creation and of that of man-made objects, as well as of his illusionistic abilities with paint on a flat support. While the white lily that sits prominently at the top of the bouquet is commonly associated with the Virgin Mary, there appears to be no further indication of a religious connotation in this painting. Neither can the presence of the notorious drunkards Bacchus and Silenus in the decoration of the tazza be thought to bear out any firm meaning on the painting as a whole. At best, we can recognize the Four Elements in it, like they were recognized in the seventeenth century in cat. no. A 218. Here, too, we can identify Earth (fruit and flowers), Water (in the vase, dew drops on the leaves), Air (butterflies, flying insects, and two birds) and Fire (the glass vase, the silver tazza and the pewter plates are products of fire). Whether in this case the prominent orange at lower right may be a reference to the House of Orange, or specifically to the young William III of Orange, also here will have to remain a matter of speculation. Assuming that the painting was a commission, de Heem may well have added the orange at the request of the patron, who, in that case was probably Dutch and an Orangist; William III had come into power as Stadtholder of Holland, Utrecht and Zeeland in 1672.

A 268

A complex and interesting painting is cat. no. A 268, which de Heem may well have started already towards the end of his Utrecht years, but which appears to have remained in the artist's studio and

which shows signs of various stages of work, and which may at last have been finished by another hand to be sold after the artist's death.[569] After de Heem had designed the composition, most probably sometime in the late 1660s, he appears to have started on elaborating the part at lower right: the ham and its surroundings. That part has some reminiscence of cat. nos. A 226- 229. An interesting feature is a *repentir,* which occurs in front of the ham: an orange was painted out and replaced by some cherries and a plum, which in its turn was overpainted with some berries - this last change, in view of the handling, was probably made by another hand. In cat. no. A 229, from de Heem's Utrecht years, the combination of a ham and an orange also occurs. As discussed above, the orange may – or may not – have been a reference to the House of Orange. Given the likely assumption that de Heem took the unfinished painting with him when he moved back to Antwerp, perhaps because it was a commission that had been cancelled, the orange may have been painted out because there the artist was less likely to sell it to an Orangist clientele than he would have in Utrecht. An apricot, hanging in front of the basket, was covered with a leaf, as an afterthought, perhaps by de Heem himself, but eventually that leaf was left unfinished - it lacks every degree of detail.

The design of the fruit and part of its handling, is reminiscent of the garland of fruit and flowers in Karlsruhe (cat. no. A 241), and even more so of cat. nos. A 238 and the cartouche painting with William III's portrait, cat. no. A 237. The plums, both those inside and those in front of the basket, fully show the master's strength, dexterity, and high degree of finish, and there can be no doubt about their authorship. The corn cobs are fully autograph in their present state but lack the ultimate strength of de Heem's final finish and highlighting as seen in the corn cobs in cat. nos. A 237 and A 238, while the grapes were doubtlessly prepared and in part elaborated by the artist, but were eventually left unfinished by him, particularly those at the back of the basket. Another hand applied the final touch.

The peony at lower right is almost a feature flower with Jan Davidsz. de Heem in his late work, and it occurs in most of his major flower pieces from the period. This motif, too, was painted completely by the artist himself, but upon close comparison with his other peonies, it also lacks some final finish: the artist used to sprinkle them with shiny dew drops, which are absent here. Such dew drops were usually added when the underlying layer had fully dried. The peony's stem, with a bud and a flower which has already lost its petals, is also entirely the master's work, and these are fully finished. Many of the other green passages in the painting, mainly foliage, however, were left unfinished by de Heem and show a less forceful execution and elaboration by a later hand. In this respect, it is interesting to note that the peony in the vase, of which the flower shows the same degree of finish as the one at lower right, has the foliage of another type of flower, which is an unlikely mistake to be made by de Heem himself, who proved to be very accurate in such matters.

During the period in which this painting first came into existence, de Heem painted many of his major flower pieces. Several of those flower paintings and garlands include a very similar pair of snowballs as this still life does, all of which may well have been based on one single drawn or painted study which the artist kept in his studio.[570] Close comparison, however, shows that here they lack the very last finish of detailed shading, and the same goes for the white rose in the centre of the bouquet, another flower that was portrayed often by de Heem. The purple tulip in the bouquet, which had been painted out at one time, had reappeared by 1959, while the red-and-yellow tulip, the wall, the curtain, and the window only reappeared during cleaning of the painting in 1999. Both tulips, as we see them, were not executed by de Heem himself. He made no preparation in the background for the red-and-yellow tulip and if he did so for the purple one, he did not finish it,

perhaps because he decided that it disturbed the balance of the composition. The small daisy in the upper half of the bouquet, too, was planned nor executed by de Heem - it even lacks a stem.
The carnation in front of the vase is attached to an unlikely thin and curvy stem. In terms of composition, it would seem to replace a stalk of wheat, such as the ones found in many of de Heem's flower paintings, but which are curiously absent here. This flower was, however, finished by the artist himself, as well as the carnation to the right of the roses. It seems that de Heem worked in *giornata,* sessions in which he concentrated on areas with the same colours: those elements which contained a strong red were finished entirely, or came close to final finishing.

The same ribbed vase of blue glass as shown here occurs in several flower paintings by de Heem, which can all be assigned to the first half of the 1670s .[571] On the very left of the vase, de Heem' s own, direct and forceful handling can be seen, but most of the vase shows a softer, somewhat weaker finish by another hand.

A2 3 Jan Dz. de Heem and (an)other hand(s), *Still life of fruit and flowers with a ham*, oil on canvas, 84 x 112 cm (cat. no. A 268) before cleaning and restauration.

The dish of peaches connects this painting with cat. no. A 242, above. The handling is very similar, and the same goes for the cherries in both paintings, which suggests that these motifs were executed around the same time in both. The leaves of the peaches, however, show the involvement of another hand. Several of the flowers in both paintings, such as the carnations and the morning glory, also show great similarity in their execution and concept.

The background and the curtain, which had previously been painted out, were probably only superficially planned by de Heem, but never received any substantial degree of finish by the artist himself. The window in the background provides a view of only sky, with some ominous grey storm clouds. Comparing the painting with its state before cleaning (fig. A2 3), it is obvious how such 'open' backgrounds contribute to the sense of space in the artist's compositions.[572]
In one specific respect, this painting differs from the majority of de Heem's still lifes, and particularly from the flower pieces: apart from the snail on the grapes, it is completely devoid of animal life. Often, de Heem's still lifes are populated by a host of flying and crawling insects; ants, flies, beetles, butterflies, caterpillars, and so on. In many of his still lifes of foodstuffs, however, the population is limited to a single snail or butterfly, while it would appear that, at least from 1650, there are no

insects at all - not even a single fly - in any of the artist's still lifes with a ham. The absence of insects, too, however, may well be another indication that the artist left the painting unfinished: in other works the insects - like the dew drops on the peonies, mentioned earlier - were obviously supplemented in the very latest stage of completion, on top of the last layer of glazing. Particularly for most of the flowers and fruit, where the insects 'live' in other works, the artist never attained that final stage.

We can only speculate why the painting was left unfinished. Perhaps de Heem was not fully satisfied with the composition or with the execution of some parts, even though, over the years, he had clearly put considerable effort into it. After designing and preparing the composition, he appears to have resumed it in at least three stages: first for the lower right, then for the basket of fruit, perhaps simultaneously with the fruit at lower left - which can be assigned as a fully finished part to de Heem himself - and lastly for the flowers. Whatever the case, the fact that the painting was left unfinished seems to be an acceptable explanation for the absence of Jan Davidsz. de Heem's signature on it.

Two still lifes with parrots

Two curious paintings by de Heem will also have originated in the first years after his return to Antwerp, cat. nos. A 245 and A 246. In view of their execution and motifs, they most likely originated almost simultaneously. Both paintings feature the same scarlet macaw and cockatoo.[573] The cockatoos in both paintings are virtually identical, the scarlet macaws differ slightly, but were undoubtedly both based on one study, and on a different study and different animals than the macaws in cat. nos. A 172, 186 and 188. The first painting, cat. no. A 245, is unfortunately only known from a black-and-white photo; it disappeared from the Adolphe Schloss collection in Paris in World War II. It is a cartouche still life in which a separate small painting and later a mirror had been inserted. It is not known what the original contents of the central frame was; when the painting was first recorded in 1800, the centre was not described, but by 1832, it contained a little flower painting (as) by Rachel Ruysch and by 1866, a painting of the Amsterdam stock exchange (as) by Job Berckheyde, and when offered at auction in 1902 and up to its disappearance, it contained a mirror.[574] In both paintings, the birds have been combined with flowers, some small fruit, and, at the bottom, snails and a frog, and a lizard. As such, they are reminiscent of de Heem's outdoor still lifes from 1652 (cat. no. A 153) and 1655 (cat. no. A 190). These creatures rather add to the exotic aspect of the painting than that they would have a specific iconographic bearing. In cat. no. A 246, the parrots are the central motif. They sit on a bare branch that is not connected to a visible tree. At their feet, there are some roses, blackberries and a poppy anemone, behind the cockatoo there are some more roses. From behind the macaw, two stalks of wheat appear, one of which passes through the beaks of the birds, while the other rests on it between them. Behind the birds is a view of an Italianate landscape, past a Mediterranean building to the left, adding to the exotic aspect of the painting. In the other painting (cat. no. A 245), the birds have been included in the cartouche of flowers and fruit around the (missing) centrepiece, which is set in a barely visible sculpted relief. Here, too, the birds are connected by the same stalks of wheat, but in this composition, there are more stalks, behind the macaw, and woven downwards through the wreath, like in other cartouche still lifes by de Heem, such as cat. no. A 239.

A 245

A 246

The presence of the sculpted cartouche prevents a view of the background, only a partly cloudy sky is visible. While in cat. no. A 246 there is a small oak tree in the background, the upper corners of cat. no A 245 each have an orange tree, the one to the left bearing an orange. Like in cat. no. A 246, the wreath also includes roses, and poppy, as well as morning glory, marigold and snowdrops. Furthermore there are, next to blackberries, strawberries, gooseberries, plums, cherries, and currants, as well as the stalks of wheat already mentioned. While in cat. no. A 246 there is only one caterpillar, in cat. no. A 245 there are various flying and crawling insects. In many details there is a distinct similarity with cat. no. A 239, the cartouche still life with the head of Christ. An interesting feature is the inclusion of the curly endives, which is found in cat. nos. A 239, A 245, as well as in cat. no. A 242, and later in cat. no. A 257, and a feature that appears to be unique to de Heem's work. A signed painting from this same period is a festoon of fruit and some flowers in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (cat. no. A 243).

A 243

A 244

It shows similarities with the Karlsruhe garland (cat. no. A 240), the bouquet-cum-still life, cat. no. A 242, as well as with, among others, various details from cat.no. A 268, discussed above. This, too, is a painting with a high degree of finish, which is still close to cat. no. A 240. As such, it would appear to form a bridge between the refined works from shortly after de Heem's return to Antwerp and a group of bouquets in vases that will have originated around 1674. Plain festoons are a rare subject in de Heem's oeuvre. Usually he included additional motifs, like in cat. nos. A 173 (Dublin) and A 223 (Turin). There are only the small festoon of roses from 1648 (cat. no. A 114) and the slightly larger festoon of fruit from *c.*1650 (cat. no. A 124). Perhaps cat. no. A 243 was the result of a special commission for a particular location or collection. In any case, de Heem has made a great effort to attain a high degree of verisimilitude by paying meticulous attention to detail and by applying multiple layers of glazing. The excellent state of preservation of the painting allows today's viewer to still enjoy it optimally. Only the lemon in the centre which will have been glazed with orpiment, will originally have stood out much more forcefully.[575] Otherwise, the lighting of the festoon is rather even and it seems that the need to elaborate the details has won from the need to round the festoon visually, the *houding* is slightly less strong. This is a feature that is apparent in many of the still lifes from this period.

A 247

A 248

A group of flower paintings and a garland from c*. 1673-1674*

Virtually the same swallowtail butterfly we see at lower right in the Rijksmuseum festoon (cat. no. A 243) appears in front of the ledge in a still life of flowers in the collection of the Mauritshuis in The Hague (cat. no. A 244). This painting, too, is very well preserved, but in general it is a little more direct in its handling, with fewer glazes than the Rijksmuseum painting. Next to butterflies and moths, both paintings abound in small flying and crawling creatures: a bumble bee, earwigs, caterpillars, beetles, snails, and ants. The glass vase and the stems inside it in the Mauritshuis painting are a true feat of illusionism and accurate observation. Atmospherically, they surpass the already amazing earlier examples such as the vase in cat. no. A 235 in Leipzig. It is interesting to note that the window that is reflected in the vase is unusual: it only has a vertical division in the centre, unlike other examples that show the four-part window frame, with a subdivision of the glass panes by strips of lead. Occasionally, de Heem shows some particular details in his windows. In cat. no. A

202 (Washington DC), for instance, it would appear that some of the glass panels are broken, and in cat. no. A 218 (Stockholm), the blue sky and white clouds outside are clearly visible in the reflection, and this is also the case in cat. no. A 252. In cat.no. A 251, there is a dark square obscuring part of the window, probably the upper part of the artist's canvas. The same may be the case in cat. no. A 215. Uniquely, the reflection in the Mauritshuis vase shows some objects standing in the window sill, among them a (probably glass) bottle of a similar shape as the one that holds the flowers.
The finish of the flowers and leaves is highly similar to that of a group of floral still lifes by de Heem that will have originated around the same time, or shortly after, most probably in the years 1673 and 1674. The first is a less crowed bouquet, on a slightly smaller canvas, dominated by tulips and roses, placed in a bulbous vase of green glass (cat. no. A 247). While the Mauritshuis painting includes various types of fruit, in this example only a branch of blackberries has been placed in the vase, but again some stalks of wheat have been inserted, as well as a stalk of grass, which hangs down from the vase to the right. Unique for de Heem's flower paintings is the inclusion of a crown imperial in the bouquet. While the Mauritshuis bouquet does not include a large red peony, cat. no. A 247, like most of de Heem's flower pieces from after his move to Utrecht, does include one, characteristically at the lower right. The African marigold hovering at the top of the bouquet once again demonstrates the artificiality of such compositions: the flower does not have a stem some 50 centimetres long, as this painting seems to suggest. De Heem was clearly also increasingly drawn to the visual capriciousness of overblown tulips. Cat. nos. A 235 (Leipzig) and A 236 (Brussels) already included a tulip that was clearly past its prime and the tulip in cat. no. A 244 (Mauritshuis) is a phase further. In cat. no. A 247, the Heem shows a variety of tulip stages, three flowers at upper right that are in their prime, one, at lower left, that is already starting to open up further and at lower right a fully overblown example has already lost some petals.

Although not as much as that example, some tulips in cat. no. A 248, in an American private collection, are also starting to burst. This large and elaborate bouquet is placed in a chalice of crystal-clear glass on a baluster foot, with a ribbed body adorned with two thin horizontal bands of milk-white glass. It is set in front of a niche on a stepped stone ledge. The bouquet is crowned by a large sunflower that has miraculously retained a bright yellow colour.[576] Like the Mauritshuis still life, this painting combines meticulous detail with a certain boldness in the execution, resulting in a waxy, fleshy texture for many of the leaves and a silky texture for many of the petals. Some flowers in the bouquets in this group, such as hollyhocks and poppy anemones have a transparent, papery feel to them. These compositions also include a multitude of crawling, creeping and flying creatures. In cat. no. A 248, there are a goldfinch and a great tit on the ledge, while a snail crawls between them and a large green grasshopper is in the process of climbing on to it to the left. Furthermore, in this painting there are bugs, a bumble bee, butterflies and moths, but the usual population of ants on the roses is missing. It may be that de Heem left them out at the request of a potential buyer or patron. The composition of most of these flower paintings is rather full and there are lots of elements suggesting liveliness and movement, such as the stalks of wheat that curl through them, and twisting and curling leaves and petals. In most, there is at least in indication of a diagonal in the composition, most clearly so in cat. nos. A 247, 248, 251, and 252. The latter, cat. no. A 252, unifies elements from cat. nos. A 248 and A 251 in a floral still life of a more modest size. The vase is a simple bottle of transparent green glass, standing on a round marble table, like the vase in cat. no. A 251. With cat. nos. A 248 and A 251, it shares the motif of the sunflower at the top of the bouquet. It features de Heem's standard white rose, hollyhock (pink and yellow), honeysuckle, and fritillary, campanula, marigold, and morning glory, most of which it shares with either, or both cat. no. A258 and A 251. The

handling of cat. no. A 252 is fully similar to that of both larger flower paintings and although it is less crowded, its impression is just as lively. It has a sprig of red currants lying next to the vase, and it, too, is full of creatures; a snail, a bumble bee, and a cross spider on the ledge, and an earwig inside the pink hollyhock, another snail on the tulip leaf in the centre, a bee and a red admiral butterfly on the sunflower, and ants on several of the flowers. The perspective of cat. A 252 is unusual. Rather than looking straight at the bouquet, or even slightly from below, as in other examples, one gets the impression of looking at the bouquet from a slightly higher viewpoint.

A 251

A 252

A 253

A 254

Two more relatively small flower vases can be assigned to the same period. Cat. no. A 253, in a private collection, is a relatively modest bouquet, in a ribbed blue glass vase, like the one in cat. no. A 244 (Mauritshuis). Several flowers were based on the same models as examples in other works, such as the pink rose in the centre, which is closely similar to the roses in both parrot paintings discussed above (cat. no. A 245 in particular), the red anemone in, among others, cat. no. A 247, while the grey iris is similar to the one in cat. no. A 244 (Mauritshuis). Here too, there is some fruit on the ledge, stalks of wheat and other stalks provide depth and liveliness, and there are several flying and crawling creatures. The last flower painting in this group (cat. no. A 254) is the result of a collaboration between Jan Davidsz. de Heem and Elias van den Broeck, his pupil, who had followed

him from Utrecht to Antwerp. The two pink roses in the centre of the bouquet are characteristic of Elias van den Broeck's work. The handling of the tulip in top and that of the purple poppy anemone at lower right betray de Heem's hand, and he may well have worked on some of the other flowers, such as the fritillaries and the white rose, as well as on some of the leaves. The handling of the vase is not his, and neither is that of the cherries. The painting may have taken some time to accomplish, since, while the handling of de Heem's flowers points to *c*.1673/74, the signature is of a later type that de Heem appears to have employed only after 1675.[577]

A 250

A 249

In view of its modelling and handling, a garland of fruit and flowers in the Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museums (cat. no. A 250) is closely connected with this group of flower paintings and must have been executed in the same period. For a long time, this painting was attributed to Abraham Mignon and its abraded signature was not recognised as de Heem's.[578] The handling of the flowers, fruit and foliage is very similar to that in cat. nos. A 248 and A 251, for instance, as well as to cat. not A 255. The cut-open fig to the right closely resembles that at lower right in cat. no. A 251, and may have been based on the same study, which also served for the fig in cat. no. A 243 (Rijksmuseum). The anemone to its right had already appeared much earlier in cat. nos. A 212 and A213. This once again confirms de Heem's consistent, clever, but sparse and unobtrusive use of existing studies, often years apart.

Vivat Oraenge

Returning to cat. no. A 248 (illustrated above), at the lower left, that painting includes a laurel wreath and an orange on a branch, with buds of orange blossom, and two small unripe oranges. The orange, combined with this symbol of victory, may well refer to the reinstalled power of William III of the House of Orange, and as such, the painting may have been destined for a Dutch, rather than a Flemish patron. Whatever the case, the execution of the laurel wreath and of the orange is fully similar to those in a painting with an unmistakable Orangist subject, cat. no. A 249, in the Loo Palace in Apeldoorn, which in view of de Heem's chronology, was painted after his return to Antwerp. The painting shows, in a hard-stone niche, a still life of oysters, a Wanli porcelain plate holding a half-peeled lemon, a pewter caster, and three wine glasses: a Venetian-style glass of orangey-white wine, a tall glass of red wine, and in the centre, a rummer of white wine.[579] Above this still life, suspended from an orange-red ribbon, horizontally hangs a laurel wreath, interwoven with pansies, with a large orange in the centre. To the left, a flowering orange branch hangs down, to the right hangs a branch

of olives. On a stone scroll, below the niche, there is an inscription 'VIVAT ~ ORAENGE'. The general tendency of this image can be interpreted as a celebration of the reinstallation of William III as Stadtholder, which installation brings prosperity and riches to the country. The pansies in the wreath no doubt stand for dedication to the young Stadtholder, while the olive branch represents the peace the he is expected to bring.[580] It is not certain for whom the painting was produced, but in 1736 it was auctioned from the estate of the Leiden postmaster Robbert de Neufville. He cannot have been its first owner, however, since he was only a few years old when the painting was executed. He was born in Frankfurt-am-Main and came to the Netherlands where he settled in Leiden where he first assisted and later, in 1714, took over the position of postmaster general from his uncle, Nicolaes Clignet. De Neufville bought a baronetcy in England, in March 1709, so under Queen Anne, and after the reign of King William III.[581] He was certainly a protestant, but no ties with the House of Orange are apparent. De Neufville appears to have had connections in Utrecht, where his unmarried sister Maria apparently was a society figure.[582] There can be little doubt that de Heem painted this work, probably in commission, for a Dutch Orangist patron, which shows that despite his return to Antwerp, he still had strong ties with the Northern Netherlands.

In spite of de Heem's high degree of verisimilitude, also in this still life some inaccuracies can be spotted. The decoration of the Wanli plate is non-existent for such a flat plate, this type of double border is only found on deep bowls, so-called *klapmutsen*, and moreover, the sequence of the panels in the outer border is not properly repetitive.[583] Also the 'reflection' of the oyster in the cuppa of the rummer, is not a reflection, but a repetition of the shape as we see it.[584]

A 256

1675

The only known dated still life from de Heem's later career is a garland of fruit and flowers, dated 1675 (cat. no. A 256). It is an elaborate, highly detailed work of high quality, painted when the artist was about 69 years of age. He must have painted with the aid of good lenses and magnifiers, assuming that his eyesight had gone down with age. In many details, it is very close in quality and handling to several of the flower pieces discussed above, compare, for instance, the white rose and the hollyhocks in cat. nos. A 248 and A 252, the dark-flamed tulips in cat.no. A 248, the snowballs in cat. nos. A 248 and A 251, and the figs in cat. no. A 251. The patterns of the grey marble niche are also related to those of the supports of the vases in those flower paintings, as is the snail on the ledge. The overall handling, however, has become somewhat sharper and slightly harder than in

those somewhat earlier flower pieces. Also, there is less elegant 'movement'; only two small stalks of wheat have been added, and while some of the outer flower stems and branches have a graceful curve to them, the whole arrangement feels more static. Also, the arrangement is less rounded than, for instance, that of cat. nos. A 240 (Karlsruhe) and A 243 (Rijksmuseum), even though de Heem placed elements at the edge of the garland in shadow (the red plums, the lower part of the bunch of grapes, and the medlars) and made the flowers in the centre come forward through their bright tonality. While there are actually quite a few creatures in the picture – no fewer than four snails, a caterpillar, an orange tip butterfly, a bumble bee, a small insect on the yellow hollyhock, a maybug, and a lizard – the painting does not feel crowded, perhaps because of the absence of ants.

The handling of cat. no. A 255, a flower painting in Leipzig, is very similar to that of cat. no. A 256, and as such it most likely originated in 1675 as well. This flower vase is also set in a niche of dark grey marble, very similar to that in cat. no. A 256. Interestingly, the green glass bottle that holds the bouquet is marked with a large glass seal depicting a standing winged figure in a long dress, possibly the Archangel Gabriel, with the letters EH to the left and possibly a G to the right.

A 255
A2 4 Jan Dz. de Heem, reflection of the artist in the vase in cat. no. A 255 (detail).

Whether this is purely a faithful depiction of an existing marked bottle, or whether a deeper meaning should be assigned to this is uncertain. Perhaps the initials refer to a patron who commissioned the piece? Nicolaisen (2012) detected a religious symbolism in the painting, combining the white lilies at the top, as flowers associated with the Virgin Mary, with the angel on the mark. However, there are several other de Heem flower paintings with white lilies in the top of the bouquet (cat. nos. A 193, 198, 233, 242, and 244) without any obvious religious connotation. In the case of others, cat. nos. A 093 and 094 Munich and variant) and certainly A 118 (Laxenburg) in which the lilies crowns an image of Mary, such a connotation may well be valid. Nicolaisen also recognised the reflection of the artist in the vase, visible between the stems to the right of the glass seal.[585] The artist is wearing a grey hat and a white necktie (fig. A2 4). This reflecting self-portrait appears to be unique in de Heem's late oeuvre.[586]

In this bouquet, de Heem repeats, at upper right, a tulip he had included earlier in cat. nos. A 235 (also in Leipzig), A 236 (Brussels), and A 241 (Florence).[587] Here, too, the floral bouquet has been

supplemented with some fruit: branches of cherries and blackberries are part of the bouquet, and at front right lie several apricots on a branch. Also a sprig of pea pods has been included in the bouquet. Such multiple inclusions are specific to the work of Jan Davidsz. de Heem. He clearly inspired followers, such as his son Cornelis de Heem, Abraham Mignon, Maria van Oosterwijck, Jacob Rotius, and Jacob van Walscapelle to such inclusions, but with them, in more than most cases, they are restricted to one item. The inclusion of fruit on the ledge in front of the vase in their works was clearly also inspired by de Heem.
While cat. no. A 255 may well have originated shortly before the dated garland (cat. no. A 256), cat. no. A 257, in Dresden, must have originated later. It includes several motifs that can also be found in cat. no A 255, but modelled and handled differently, compare, for instance, the white and the pink roses, the peony, the tulips, the Chinese lantern flower, and the apricots. In general, the handling in cat. no. A 257 is somewhat more rigid and harder. A rare motif that it shares with the garland from 1675, seen from a different angle but rendered very similarly, is the dried-out thistle flower with its fluffy seeds. While cat. no. A 255 still has some degree of a slanting diagonal, in cat. no. A 257 that shape has almost disappeared. Some stalks of wheat have been woven through the bouquet, but they barely have the lively curves found in earlier examples. But here, too, de Heem has added other motifs than flowers to the bouquet, even more than previously.

A 257

Next to the stalks of wheat, there are two branches of blackberries, one of chestnuts, and one of plums. It is not entirely clear whether the branch of acorns that hangs down in front of the ledge originates from the vase or from behind it. There is also plenty of animal life: butterflies, a wasp, a caterpillar, a bumble bee, an ichneumon fly, two snails and a large dragonfly.

Jacob Rotius

The first item in the 1715 sale of the estate of the Hoorn burgomaster Nicolaes van Suchtelen was “A capital piece, showing a festoon of fruits and flowers, particularly beautifully painted by the old de Heem”.[588] This description in itself provides no ground to identify that painting as cat. no. 717, discussed above, but this becomes more likely when we

otice that lot 2 in the auction catalogue was “A festoon of flowers and fruit, as a pendant to that by d’Heem by J. Rotius”.

The Hoorn painter Jacob Rotius (1644-1681/82), particularly in his later work, was clearly influenced by Jan Davidsz. de Heem. Jacob Rotius signed and dated a flower painting from 1674 on a similar glass seal as the one in cat. no. A 255 (fig. A2 5).[589] The date of Rotius‘s painting would seem to match that of de Heem, which appears to be another indication that Rotius had a rather profuse knowledge of de Heem’s paintings from the late 1660s onwards. Obviously, there is after all some truth in Houbraken’s remark that Jacob Rotius ‘was a pupil of the old de Heem’.[590]

How intimate Houbraken’s knowledge of Rotius and his career was, remains somewhat unclear; while he appears to have been well informed about Rotius’s depressive state of mind, “by which some […] conclude that he shortened his thread of life”, his statement of the artist’s age at death, which according to him, probably correctly, occurred in 1681, was incorrect. Rotius was baptized in September 1644 and thus was 37 or 38 at the time of his death, not 50 years old.[591] Jacob Rotius was probably initially trained by his father, Jan Albertsz. Rotius (1624-1666), a prolific painter of portraits and of some still lifes. There is some confusion about the authorship of several still lifes from the 1660s – Jan Albertsz. Rotius painted a few still lifes in the style of the Haarlem ‘monochrome banquet’, at least into the 1650s. A dated still life from 1662, clearly influenced by Willem Kalf, is also correctly assigned to the father.[592] An alternative attribution to Jacob should probably be considered, however.

A2 5 Jacob Rotius, *Flowers in a glass vase*, signed and dated 1674, oil on canvas, 95 x 75 cm. Location unknown.

A still life from 1664 more clearly shows the hand of Jacob, then about 20 years old, and is still reminiscent of Kalf. One wonders whether, after the death of his father in 1666, Jacob Rotius decided to go to Utrecht, in order to seek some further tuition from de Heem and, perhaps, Abraham Mignon. We can follow the development of his oeuvre – in contrast to that of the vast majority of de Heem’s (supposed) pupils and followers from this period – quite closely through a series of dated works that show a distinct connection with de Heem’s

development over those years, but he only very rarely copied or shared motifs identically. There is no evidence that Jacob Rotius left Hoorn for longer spans of time. He may have paid regular, shorter visits to de Heem's studio, perhaps even as an agent for collectors such as Nicolaes van Suchtelen. During such visits he will have seen de Heem's work in progress and may have made notes or quick sketches that inspired him for his own compositions. Particularly if their relationship already dated back to de Heem's Utrecht period, which is most likely, he may well have instructed Rotius on specific techniques or treatments during such visits. Rotius' position recalls that of Laurens Craen, who also appears to have spent (a) substantial amount(s) of time in de Heem's studio, without leaving documentary evidence that he spent any time in Antwerp.

A2 6 Jacob Rotius, *Still life of flowers and fruit,* signed and dated 1668, oil on canvas (measurements unknown, probably 68 x 56 cm). Location unknown

The earliest painting by Jacob Rotius that appears to provide evidence of knowledge of de Heem's (and Mignon's) work is a dated still life from 1668 (fig. A2 6).[593] It suggests that he saw some of de Heem's flower paintings from the mid-1660s, such as cat. no. A 205 (Cambridge, compare the branch of blackberries hanging in front of the vase), and perhaps cat. no. A 218 (Stockholm). Its pendant from the same year appear to be an amalgam of inspirations from Kalf, Mignon and de Heem. The tazza in that painting, curiously, recalls earlier compositions by de Heem such as cat. no. A 097 and even more so Laurens Craen's adaptions of those (cf. fig. A 44 in the previous chapter).

A flower painting by Jacob Rotius from 1671, with a white poppy anemone turned backwards at the top and a half-open tulip at lower right, suggests combined knowledge of cat. nos. A 202 (Washington) and, again, A 218 (Stockholm).[594] While fig. A2 5 shows a Rotius flower painting from 1674 with a glass seal on the vase like cat. no. A 255, another flower painting from 1674, in the Seattle Museum of Art (fig. A2 7), provides additional proof that Rotius knew cat. no. A 255.

A2 7 Jacob Rotius, *Flowers in a vase in a niche*, signed and dated 1674, oil on canvas, 74 x 56,5 cm. Seattle, Seattle Art Museum, inv. no. 65.164.

The general composition, including the niche, is quite similar to de Heem's painting. The sprig of lilies at the top, however, appears to have been borrowed freely from cat. no. A 244 (Mauritshuis). The motif of the grasshopper on the ledge recalls cat. nos. A 247 and 248, both from about 1673. In an undated flower painting, Rotius placed a group of three apricots on the ledge to the right of the vase like in cat. no. A 255. More than the apricots in cat. no. A 255, however, Rotius' apricots resemble those in cat. no. A 257, to be discussed below.[595] In fact, more motifs in that painting are reminiscent of cat. no. A 257.

Jacob Rotius also painted several upright still lifes of fruit and objects in a niche, unfortunately all not dated, that show a relationship with the work of de Heem and that of Abraham Mignon. An example that was with Max Stern, Düsseldorf, in 1936 (fig. A2 8) includes a columbine cup that is featured regularly in de Heem's still lifes, such as cat. nos. A 199, 209, and 224, in a still life in a niche that recalls cat. nos. A 216 and A 217, as well as some work by Mignon (cf. fig. AU 15). An unsigned example (fig. A2 9) includes de Heem's orange from cat. nos. A 218, 220, 221, as well as A 264, and a group of oysters included in cat. nos. A 220 and 221, which connects Rotius's paintings with de Heem's from the late 1660s, which coincides with the rendering of the oysters, which is highly similar to a Rotius painting from 1668 (fig. A2 6).

A2 8 Jacob Rotius, *Still life of fruit and a columbine cup in a niche*, signed, oil on canvas, 63 x 54 cm. Location unknown.
A2 9 Jacob Rotius, *Still life in niche*, oil on canvas, 78 x 64 cm. Location Unknown.

Returning to cat. no A 256, the painting that may have been in Nicolaes van Suchtelen's collection, and its pendant, several garlands by Rotius are known that have the same concept as de Heem's 1675 painting: a square niche in front of which a garland of flowers and fruit is hanging from nails in the upper corners, attached by blue ribbons, which confirms that Rotius knew de Heem's garland. Of the known examples, not one fully matches de Heem's painting in size. A dated work from 1676 that was on the German art market in 1992 comes quite close, it was probably reduced somewhat, particularly to the left and will originally have measured about 59 x 75 centimeters, about 2,5 centimeters smaller on all sides than cat. no. A 256 (fig. A2 10).[596]

Another example has almost the same width as cat. no. A 256, but is about 10 centimetres less high, which would make it less of a match (fig. A2 11).[597] It may be that Rotius's pendant is missing or lost, but at the same time we can also not be fully certain that cat. A 256 was the van Suchtelen de Heem.

In any case, Jacob Rotius's dated still lifes, at least to some degree, provide confirmations for the hypothetical chronology of de Heem's work after the mid-1660s presented here.

A 256

A2 10 Jacob Rotius, *Garland of fruit and flowers before a niche*, signed and dated 1676, oil on canvas, 57,8 x 73,7 cm. Location unknown.

A2 11 Jacob Rotius, *Garland of fruit and flowers before a niche*, oil on canvas, 55 x 79 cm. Location unknown

Two untypical flower paintings

A signed still life of flowers in Pasadena CA (cat. no. A 269) presents a problem. It is a strange amalgam of de Heem motifs, many of high quality, but also of deviating elements. In addition to the signature, of which the J is almost completely missing, there is a date which has been read as 1654, but the third and fourth digits are indistinct.[598] Apart from the fact that de Heem did not produce any elaborate flower pieces in the first half of the 1650s, the handling does also not fit for that period.

A 269

A2 12 Circle of Jan Dz. de Heem?, *Floral still life*, bears signature 'J.D.De.Heem.ʃ', oil on panel, 47 x 36 cm. Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, inv. no. 906A.

There appears to be some connection with flower paintings from the early 1670s, such as cat. no. A 235 (Leipzig), one of the few de Heem paintings that also includes gooseberries, but the composition is built up differently. While many of de Heem's flower paintings have a rather dense group of flowers in the centre and a strong tendency towards a diagonal arrangement of flowers from lower left to upper right, in this painting there are two horizontally arranged clusters of flowers and at best a slight diagonal between the orange and the tulip right of centre at the top and another between the peonies at lower right and the tulip at top left. As mentioned, some motifs are characteristic of de Heem's hand in type and execution, such as the ribbed vase, the red admiral butterfly, and the curly leaf of the stalk of wheat. Other motifs belong to de Heem's idiom but their execution is different, in general more opaque and 'waxy', such as the pea pods, the peonies, the white rose, the orange's leaves, the iris, and the branch of gooseberries. The hollyhock at top centre, in shape and execution, is alien to de Heem's work. We must assume that de Heem certainly had a hand in the execution of this painting but he may well have left it unfinished, after which it was completed by another, unidentifiable hand.[599]

Another still life of flowers in a vase is even more puzzling (fig. A2 12).[600] At lower left, it bears a signature 'JDDe Heem ʃ' which looks rather convincing. Also, it includes a few flowers of which the execution is of high quality; the two poppy anemones and the white carnation (which probably has lost some red lake pigment in the flaming) as well as the blue borage flowers closely approach de Heem's autograph quality, compare, in particular, cat. nos. A 242, and A 244, and it cannot be excluded that he was involved in their execution. The two sprigs of currants on the table to the right are reminiscent of such motifs with de Heem, but their execution does not appear to be his. The window, with a drapery's tassel hanging in front of it, is reminiscent of the same motif in cat. no. A 260, to be discussed below, but the quality of its execution is less.[601] Other motifs in the painting, such as the remaining fruit and flowers, as well as the vase, are relatively weak and, in my view, certainly not by de Heem. The painting deserves a mention here, also because it has been considered as an autograph work in most of the art-historical literature, but there is no firm ground to include it in the catalogue of his works, certainly not as a finished piece.

A 258

Two late forest-floor paintings

Closely related in its execution to cat. no. A 257 (Dresden), discussed above, is a forest-floor still life in Munich (cat. no. A 258), which is not signed and which was traditionally – and quite understandably, in view of its composition – attributed to Abraham Mignon. While it is indeed reminiscent of examples by Mignon, its handling and motifs are connected with those by de Heem shortly after 1675.[602] The iris is virtually identical to that in cat. no. A 255 in Leipzig and the pink rose and the snowballs to those in cat. no. A 257 in Dresden.

A 259

A2 13 Ernst Stuven, *Forest-floor still life*, signed, oil on canvas, 88 x 74 cm. Location unknown.

The bare tree is reminiscent of the one in de Heem's painting in Liechtenstein/Vienna (cat. no. A 232) and the rock in front of it may well have been based on the same study as the rock in that painting.

The white-and-red poppy is reminiscent of the one in the Liechtenstein example, but its weak execution and awkward placement suggests that it was added by a later hand
. The flying tit, aiming for a caterpillar, is reminiscent in pose and handling of the goldfinch flying in in cat. no. A 242 of a few years earlier. The handling and modelling of the two bullfinches in the upper part of the composition is rather weak, judging from a photo, they may very well not have been included by de Heem himself.

A similar composition, this one featuring fruit rather than flowers, is in a private collection (cat. no. A 259). It bears an apocryphal Mignon signature, but it is probably identical with a painting that was auctioned in 1807, correctly as by de Heem. The handling of the fruit and leaves is closely similar to that of cat. no. A 260, to be discussed below, which is signed by the artist. The execution of the painting is very meticulous, but less dexterous than in earlier work, no doubt due to the advanced age of the painter, who had passed the age of 70 by this time. It is interesting to note that a copy by Ernst Stuven exists (and a second copy may also be by Stuven), which would indicate that this painting was in Amsterdam by the 1680s (fig. A2 13).[603]

Stuven did not copy de Heem's composition verbatim, however. He left out the landscape background and the butterflies, moved the branch of three blackberries, changed some of the leaves and added some peaches of his own in the centre. In view of the quality of its execution, Stuven's copy is a relatively early work, probably from the first half of the 1680s, so in any case it was painted within a decade after the original. This indicates that the painting was done for, or at least bought by a Dutch collector. It may be that during his later years de Heem was working partly for a Dutch, perhaps Amsterdam, art dealer. It is not easy to suggest a proper date for cat. no. A 259. The handling is softer than de Heem's paintings that can be situated around the garland from 1675, but the handling is different from the Heem's last works. A date in the second half of the 1670s appears to be most appropriate.

Two late luxury still lifes

From the last years of Jan Davidsz. de Heem's activity, there are two luxury still lifes, both in private collections. They are not as large as many earlier examples, but they still have a degree of sumptuousness. In type and motifs, they hark back to work from the second half of the 1660s, such as cat. nos. A 225 and 230, but their palette is somewhat blonder and the lighting more even. Cat. no. A 260, in the handling of the fruit and foliage, is closely related to the late forest-floor still life in private hands, cat. no. A 259, discussed above.[604] The fruit, upon and in front of a silver tazza and in a wicker basket, is clustered in the same manner as in that painting. The motif of the window and a tasselled cord – here not visibly attached to drapery – firs appeared in the second half of the 1660s.[605] The oysters and the overturned rummer, in their handling, are reminiscent of , for instance, cat. nos. A 222 and 228, as well as of cat. no. A 225. The pomegranate and the lemon next to it are reminiscent in appearance to those in cat. no. A 243 (Amsterdam). Probably the lemon has the same problem of discoloration. It may be that de Heem had already started this still life back in Utrecht and finished it at a later date. On the other hand, it may be that it is not as late as suggested here, but that it was already finished in Utrecht. In any case, it appears to have been in a Dutch collection by 1762, when it was offered at auction in Amsterdam.

A 260

Cat. no. A 261 can be recognized as a late work with more certainty. It connects well in style and handling with the late still lifes of fruit to be discussed below, and it also connects with a group of still lifes by Elias van den Broeck, one of which is dated 1676, the artists only known dated work (fig. A2 16). In de Heem's painting, fruit and oysters are grouped around the silver-gilt cup-and-cover that he had repeatedly depicted since the mid-1640s. Upon a bottle casket to the right, next to an orange branch, a silver shaker and a chestnut in its shell, is a red-boiled crayfish, a motif de Heem had virtually abandoned by the mid-1650s; only one example had occurred since, in the large still life in Utrecht (cat. no. A 199). We find a very similar and similarly placed crayfish in a still life by Elias van den Broeck (fig. A2 14), while another, more sumptuous composition (A2 15) is also clearly related to cat. no. A 261.[606] As mentioned earlier, Elias van den Broeck had followed de Heem to Antwerp and probably maintained a close artistic relationship with his master. Like de Heem in this period, he only very rarely dated his work, but the still lifes in figs. A2 14 and 15 cannot have originated too distantly in time from a dated example from 1676 (fig. A2 16). Van den Broeck's oyster, to the left in fig. A2 14, is highly similar to de Heem's. It has been placed close to a melon, in a similar position as in de Heem's painting, and the wine glass also occupies a very similar position.

A 261

A2 16 Elias van den Broeck, *Still life of fruit and oysters*, signed and dated 1676, oil on panel, 21,6 x 28,9 cm. Private collection.

A2 14 Elias van den Broeck, *Still life with oysters, fruit and a crayfish*, oil on canvas, 32,2 x 41,2 cm. Location unknown.
A2 15 Elias van den Broeck, *Still life with fruit, oysters and drinking vessels*, signed, oil on canvas, 60 x 80,6 cm. Location unknown

In the painting in fig. A2 15, van den Broeck has included some flying butterflies, seen form above, with fully spread wings, just like de Heem's European peacock butterfly in cat. no. A 261. While van den Broeck's dated still life provides an indication of the dates for the other works, including cat. no. A 261, it remains no more than an indication. Since this is van den Broeck's only known dated still life and the chronology of his works is uncertain, it is difficult to decide whether the other paintings came before or after it. Conjecturing that van den Broeck's earlier still lifes are the most refined, painted under direct guidance of de Heem – as can also be observed for the work of Cornelis de Heem – the other two illustrated here may well have originated in the years after the dated example from 1676. This also appears to be a likely date – *c.*1677-1678 – for cat. no. A 261.

Jan Davidsz. de Heem's last still lifes

It would appear that after *c.*1678, Jan Davidsz. de Heem painted only little. By then he had reached the age of 72, and may have been impeded by health issues. The degree of detail, also of these last works, indicates that de Heem's sight – probably with the aid of lenses and magnifiers – was still quite good, however.

Six still lifes of fruit, all in private collections, can probably be assigned to de Heem's last years, 1678 to 1684, about one painting a year. Five are on canvas of relatively modest measurements, one is on a small panel. Interestingly, while de Heem had always been intrigued by creeping, crawling and flying creatures and had included them in his still lifes abundantly, these last six pieces are completely devoid of them. In all, the still life has been arranged in front of a stone niche, upon a wooden or stone table. Three include oysters, and the choice of fruit is restricted and rather commonplace: bunches of grapes, white and black, peaches, apricots, figs, pomegranates, some nuts. Four of the six include a fairly prominent orange. Probably the earliest of the group is a still life of fruit in front of a small arched niche, with a pewter plate of apricots and cherries on a dark tablecloth in the centre, a porcelain bowl of strawberries and peaches to the right, and a Venetian-style wine glass next to a tall wine glass in the back (cat. no. A 262).[607]

A 262

A2 17 J.Dz. de Heem, *Still life of fruit*, (reconstruction – cat. no. A 262 superimposed upon cat. no. A 265, indicating the possible original appearance of cat. no. A 262).

The porcelain bowl is similar in decoration to several examples in still lifes from the from the mid- and late 1660s. The composition, however, is more additive and not as lively as that of earlier examples, also because of the more even lighting. Comparing it with cat. nos. A 264 and 265, to be discussed below, it seems likely that cat. A 262 originally may have been larger. Superimposing a photos of cat. no. A 262 upon one of cat. no. A 265 gives an impression of its possible original looks (fig. A2 17).

Cat. no. A 264 repeats the cluster of two figs, a bunch of grapes and its vine from cat. no. A 262, and shares the orange and its branch with three still lifes from the 1660s, cat. nos. A 218, 220 and 221. Apparently de Heem had kept the study of this motif. Or perhaps he still, or again, had access to either cat. no. A220 or 221, since several of the oysters also appear to have been borrowed from that composition. The prominent rays of in-falling light on the right side of the niche are similar to those observed earlier in cat. nos. A 195, 197, 242, 243, and in a somewhat different manner, A 259. Similar prominent rays of in-falling light occur in cat. nos. A 265 and 267, and, to a degree, in A 263.[608]

A 264

When cat. no. A 264 surfaced in 2000, the peach had been painted out entirely.[609] Originally, its texture was probably much like that of the peach in cat. no. A 263, which painting on the whole is very similar in palette and texture to cat. no. A 264. The focal point of the latter, unlike in any other de Heem still life, is a blue-and-white porcelain (or Delftware) jug, or rather a vase, the blue decoration on which was probably painted with smalt and as a result has turned grey.[610]

A 263

A 265

On it hangs a wreath of small flowers, also including a medlar and some hazelnuts. In front lie a branch of three white plums, an orange and some small fruit. The stepped ledge in front of the niche, as well as that in cat. no A 264, recalls some of de Heem's earliest paintings from 1627 and 1628, but it is unlikely that this similarity is intentional. The general composition of cat. no. A 265 – a table in front of a prominent niche – is similar to that of cat. no. A 264, but here two plates of oysters have been given more emphasis attention than the fruit around them. Several details, such as the pomegranate, the skins of the lemon and orange, as well as the oysters, still show de Heem's usual fineness, but others are less convincing. In part this may be due to condition issues, particularly in the background, but the painting on the whole possesses a certain stiffness that may well be due to its author's advanced age.

A 266

A 267

A2 18 Rachel Ruysch, *Still life of flowers*, signed and dated 'Rachel Ruysch/ AE 83 1747', oil on panel, 29,5 x 24 cm. Lille, Musée des Beaux-Arts, inv. no. 685.

This certainly seems to be the case with cat. nos. A 266 and 267. These two small and modest still lifes of fruit may well have been painted after 1680, in the last years of de Heem's life. Both are signed with a spiral flourish in the J, which is highly similar to that in de Heem's signature on two documents from 1683.[611] This same initial (or remains of it) can be found on cat. nos. A 254, 261 and 254.[612] Before 1675 it does not appear on paintings. These last two still lifes of fruit radiate a certain naïveté and persistent effort, much like Rachel Ruysch's latest still lifes, which she proudly signed and inscribed with the date and her age (fig. A2 18).

In both cat. no. A 266 and 267, de Heem has paid much attention to the texture of the table and niche and to the in-falling light. Like in cat. no. A 265, the texture of the grapes has become quite hard, compared to de Heem's earlier grapes they look rather glassy. The vine leaves and orange leaves have a rather metallic feel to them, which is also already the case to some degree in cat. no. A 265. Nevertheless, the modelling and the play of light on the fruit still show de Heem's natural ability to create a convincing illusion.

While paintings such as cat. no. A 261, 264 and probably also A 265 will have been produced for the market, the artist may well have painted cat. nos. A 266 and 267 for his own enjoyment and perhaps to keep in shape. These small still lifes suggest that up to the last years before his death in 1684, Jan Davidsz. de Heem continued doing what he had devoted his life to: painting still lifes.